What is claimed is:

1. A method of encoding binary data for transmission over an image data channel, comprising:

defining encoding parameters adapted for encoding the binary data in such a manner that a transformed linear matrix image produced by transmitting an encoded linear matrix image over the image data channel is reconstructable into the encoded linear matrix image; and

encoding the binary data into the encoded linear matrix image according to the encoding parameters.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

electronically storing the encoded linear matrix image as an image file.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

associating the image file with a web page.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

encrypting the binary data prior to the encoding.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

identifying image-distortion characteristics of the image data channel; and wherein the defining includes analyzing the image-distortion characteristics so as to determine the encoding parameters.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the binary data represents a firmware upgrade for a printing apparatus.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the encoding further includes encoding a data section of the encoded linear matrix image, the data section having a plurality of regions of colored data markings, each of the data marking regions representative of a predetermined quantity of the binary data.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein each individual one of the plurality of data marking regions has a predetermined size and one of a set of predetermined colors.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising:

identifying image-distortion characteristics of the image data channel; and

determining the predetermined size and the set of predetermined colors from the image-distortion characteristics.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the predetermined amount of the binary data encoded in each color marking region corresponds to the number of different predetermined colors in the set.

11. The method of claim 8, wherein the numeric value of the predetermined quantity of the binary data represented by a selected individual one of the plurality of data marking regions corresponds to the particular one of the predetermined colors used for the selected data marking region.

12. The method of claim 9, wherein the image-distortion characteristics are obtained from a particular image data channel with which the encoded linear matrix image is associated.

13. The method of claim 9, wherein the image-distortion characteristics include one or more characteristics selected from the group consisting of dimensional scaling, color mapping, downsampling, clipping, pagination, margination, smoothing, compression, and printer control language encapsulation.

14. The method of claim 7, wherein the encoding further includes encoding a header section of the encoded linear matrix image, the header section having a plurality of regions of colored header markings, a subset of the header marking regions indicative of at least one encoding parameter used for encoding the data section.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the header section further includes another subset of the header marking regions indicative of a detection key for recognizing the transformed linear matrix image.